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ABSTRACT

Twelve basic tenets can be used to guide administrators who want to become effective curriculum leaders. The following tenets are not formulas for success, but represent different ways of looking at curriculum leadership: (1) curriculum leaders' actions are guided by a curriculum model; (2) leaders use curriculum governance documents to identify and clarify the directions, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the curriculum monitoring process; (3) leaders create and use curriculum materials that are tied to school district guiding documents; (4) curriculum leaders know the difference between curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring and employ leadership skills accordingly; (5) curriculum leaders see curriculum development as a continuous process; (6) curriculum leaders empower others in curriculum construction and monitoring; (7) curriculum leaders see the interconnectedness of curriculum supervision and staff development; (8) curriculum leaders are trained, not born; (9) curriculum leaders are guided by research in the decision-making process; (10) curriculum leadership emerges from the ranks of all the stakeholders in the school district and school building; (11) curriculum leaders believe in self-improvement, staff development, and supervision as tools of improvement; and (12) curriculum leaders operate as facilitators and seek consensus rather than compromise. (SI)

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How To Improve Curriculum Leadership — Twelve Tenets

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Tips for Principals from NASSP January 1990

How To Improve Curriculum Leadership — Twelve Tenets

Twelve basic tenets can be used to guide administrators who want to become effective curriculum leaders. A tenet is an opinion, doctrine, or principal considered to be true. No particular importance is implied by the order of the tenets presented below.

Tenet No. 1: Curriculum leaders' actions are guided by a curriculum model.

Administrators who see themselves as curriculum leaders employ a curriculum model as part of their educational vision. This model is articulated by the administrator in many different ways — in print, orally, and in daily practice. The curriculum model identifies the steps, stages, or functions of the curriculum process.

Whether the model is a road map or a compass in curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring, it clearly identifies the components of curriculum work and the commitment to curriculum excellence. The curriculum model becomes the hallmark of the administrator's vision of educational excellence.

Tenet No. 2: Curriculum leaders use curriculum governance documents to identify and clarify the directions, roles, and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring process.

Curriculum governance documents are written statements that explain the various functions of curriculum leaders and curriculum activities. These documents become declarations that sanction curriculum work in the district and in respective buildings. In short, they provide legitimacy to curriculum construction and monitoring activities. They provide a tool for a curriculum leader to maintain curriculum continuity.

In turn, the written documentation becomes a legacy that endures time and personnel turnover. The governance documents provide a guarantee that curriculum construction and monitoring are the work fabric of school improvement for that district and its buildings.

Tenet No. 3: Curriculum leaders create and use curriculum materials that are tied to school district guiding documents.

Guiding documents are those written documents in a school district that provide the larger context for school improvement. Guiding documents include school district policy statements, school board policy, school board goals, etc. Curriculum materials such as school curriculum goals, scope and sequence charts, and curriculum guides must show a relationship to these guiding documents.

Guiding documents provide information about the larger picture and a context from which curriculum materials are derived. Guiding documents are valuable because they are necessary to steer the school district and district schools forward in the larger context of school improvement. As curriculum materials are constructed and monitored, they must find a "home" in these guiding documents.

Tenet No. 4: Curriculum leaders know the difference between curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring and employ leadership skills according to the stage of curriculum work.

Curriculum leaders recognize that orchestrating curriculum construction activities is different than orchestrating curriculum monitoring activities. In curriculum construction, the stakeholder's motivation is different, the nature of the tasks are different, and the products are different.

Curriculum construction activities should include substantial time spent on curriculum-focused staff development programs that ensure that personnel are prepared to create, document, or record the curriculum.

Curriculum monitoring requires considerable curriculum-related staff development programs that prepare teachers to switch gears from creating activities to monitoring activities that involve implementing, measuring, and evaluating the curriculum product. Too often, administrators underestimate the major differences between curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring in school improvement activities.

Tenet No. 5: Curriculum leaders see curriculum development as a continuous process.

Curriculum leaders recognize that there is a starting point in curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring, but there is no end in curriculum work. Curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring have benchmark products that indicate progress or achievement such as the completion of K-12 scope and sequence charts, but curriculum cannot be viewed as an activity that is completed.

Certainly, there are times when other specific school improvement goals must take priority over curriculum articulation. But curriculum articulation is so vital to the

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core outcomes of school improvement and the quality of the curriculum is so critically linked to student achievement that curriculum work must be perceived as a continous process.

One of the major skills of an effective curriculum leader is impressing on teachers that curriculum is a continuous process and that the process is intertwined with other school improvement goals.

Tenet No. 6: Curriculum leaders believe empowerment is a leadership behavior or characteristic and empower others in curriculum construction and monitoring.

Effective administrators strengthen the school improvement process by encouraging cooperation, team-building, and problem-solving in a focused, project-like atmosphere. If teachers are going to use the curriculum materials, they must have the authority to create and monitor those materials.

Tenet No. 7: Curriculum leaders see the interconnectedness of curriculum supervision and staff development.

Curriculum leaders must recognize that instructional leadership involves integrated activities of curriculum, staff development, and supervision. Teachers are responsible for teaching the curriculum, but administrators have an equally important responsibility of supervising curriculum implementation.

Supervision responsibilities include:

- Monitoring the implementation of the school district curriculum in relation to student needs
- Analyzing the teacher instructional effectiveness in relation to student learning in the curriculum
- Monitoring student outcomes that occur as a result of the teacher's instruction
- Analyzing the formal assessment of student outcomes
- Using assessment information concerning student outcomes to improve the curriculum and the teaching of that curriculum.

Based on the subsequent findings from the supervisory process, the administrator and teacher must identify staff development activities and programs that are aimed at improving teacher skills in implementing and evaluating that curriculum.

Tenet No. 8: Curriculum leaders are trained, not born.

Many effective curriculum leaders have natural leadership skills, but most effective curriculum leaders are a product of training and education. In other words, they are a product of effective staff development programs. Administrators, like all personnel, must participant in effective training programs that include information, theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching.

Tenet No. 9: Curriculum leaders are guided by research in the decision-making process — especially the school effects-teacher effects research and school subject-specific research.

Administrators must remember that they have amassed a tremendous research base about what makes effective schools, effective teachers, and effective curriculum articulation. As curriculum leaders, they must study, use, and teach this research to prospective leaders (both teachers and administrators) in the school district.

Tenet No. 10: Curriculum leadership emerges from the ranks of all the stakeholders in the school district and school building.

The primary stakeholders are teachers and administrators. However, equally important stakeholders include parents, lay citizens, school board members, and students. Effective curriculum leaders empower these people as well as foster leadership in these stakeholders. School improvement leadership can and should emerge from many different levels of stakeholders in the school district.

Tenet No. 11: Curriculum leaders believe in self-improvement, staff development, and supervision as tools of instructional leadership improvement.

Effective administrators or curriculum leaders, like all other professionals, recognize that growth and change are a natural part of professional development. Systematic self-analysis, planned curriculum-focused staff development programs, and on-going supervision by superiors are tools that allow administrators to become better curriculum leaders.

Tenet No. 12: Curriculum leaders operate as facilitators and seek consensus rather than compromise.

Effective curriculum leaders have an overriding belief that teamwork and cooperative decision making create a climate of trust and respect. Effectiveness cannot be sacrificed for the goal of efficiency. The curriculum group process should be marked by consensus rather than compromise.

Rather than giving things up for the sake of compromise, curriculum leaders must seek consensus where there is a "win-win" situation rather than a "win-lose" situation. This leadership attitude must find itself into the fabric of both curriculum construction and curriculum monitoring.

Conclusion

Administrators who are heavily involved in school improvement find that curriculum leadership is the very essence of instructional leadership. The 12 tenets of curriculum leadership are not formulas for success; they represent different ways of looking at curriculum leadership.

Written by Gerald D. Bailey, professor of education at Kansas State University, Manhattan, and senior consultant in The Curriculum Leadership Institute, Emporia, Kans.

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